TAPE NO.

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NARRATOR Blakley

INTERVIEWER Lotz

PLACE Santa Barbara

DATE May 27, 1988

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Date of Interview: May 27, 1988, Blakley home, Santa Barbara
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: Introduction

How and why did you came to Santa Barbara?

Mr. B: In 1956 I was a Junior Botanist at ther Desert Botanic Garden near Phoenix, Arizona. At that time there was an opening at the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens for a groundsman superintendent and I applied for the position and came out for an interview, was accepted so in 1956 I moved my family here to Santa Barbara. We lived for a year down in town and then moved to the cottage on the grounds of the Botanic Gardens and lived there over 30 years. For 7 years I was the superintendent at the Botanic Gardens, then for a short time I was superintendent at Madam Walska's Lotusland. Later I went to work for the Goleta School District as a groundsman and was with them for 22 years. I retired in 1987 and I have more time now to chase after my history hobby.

PL: How did this interest in the Santa Barbara back country evolve?

Mr. B: I became interested in the back country from my Botanic Garden trips, collecting specimens for the gardens and later with the Boy and Girl Scouts. I used to take groups of young people into the back country and we would come across these old fireplaces and remnants of houses there.

There were old trains and roads and I questioned those, what these were and the kids were interested too, so I would do some research, thinking there was a book I could read about these places in the back country but found there was no information that covered the history of the back country so I began doing oral histories of the old timers that I could locate, who had lived back there or were descendants of those early pioneers.

PL: Do you recall the very first interview you did?

Mr. B: I don't recall the very first one but it was probably the descendent of the Pelch Family. Another family was the Davisons of Ballard, descendants of Edgar B. Davison who was one of the first forest rangers on Figueroa Mountain area.

PL: What was so fascinating about the back country?

Mr. B: Probably the lack of information and because ever since grade school I have had an interest in history so the two went together, and also my interest in natural history.

PL: Why did these people come to the back country of Santa Barbara County?

Mr. B: After the Civil War there was a westward migration, there had been a number of people who had come earlier because of the gold rush but then as the gold became more difficult to find these people went to other interests

and into the valleys and became farmers, wrote home to the mid-west and told of the excellent farming conditions so a number of people who had been moving west generation after generation starting back on the Eastern Seaboard, then to the mid-west, heard that there were parts of California good for farming, and the came west. The majority of the homesteaders of the back country came from this midwestern area of Kansas, Indiana, etc. Or they were French people who came with immigration societies that were formed to bring French people to California to settle.

PL: Were these French people the sheepherders we hear about?

Mr. B: Yes, and no. Some of them were more interested in land but did raise sheep also. These were the Garsens, Pinassis, Libeu, Birabents, Anadokes, the French group that came in the late 1880's, and they settled all through Santa Barbara County.

PL: They applied for homesteads?

Mr. B: Yes, a 160 homestead, they chose the land and in many cases in those days they weren't too careful about things so the wife and the older children could have a homestead as well so some families had a good bit of land. And until the Forest Reserve was established in 1898 nobody really checked up on how much land or how accurate these people were in establishing their homesteads or living up to the requirements for a homestead, to live on the

property for five years, build a house and do some farming Many of the people claimed the land, built a small one room framed building, lived there part of the year but worked and lived in Santa Maria or the Santa Ynez Valley. They would go up to the homestead during hunting season or other times, they would put in some oats or hay and were there only part of the year. When it was time to prove they owned the land, Joe Smith would go down and sign a statement that Tom Jones had done all that he should, and then his friend Tom Jones would do the same for Joe Smith. The people down at the court house were not that interested so they took the men's word. The officials were trying to get rid of a lot of this free land and into private hands. So a lot of the homesteads were fraudulent in that the owner did not live up to all the requirements of the Homestead Act of 1862. When the Forest Service took over the reserve, there were all these scattered homesteads in there and the first rangers of the service had to check on when the people had been to their homestead last. The people would then say, "oh yes, we have been there," but there was quite a controversy until the got that squared away.

PL: What about the land itself?

Mr. B: Some really made a good living off the land especially the people who were along the Manzana River or Sisquoc River. Other people like the Birabents up in Birabent Canyon on

Figueroa Mt. got by but the land was not as good and they finally gave up and left the cattle up there with just one person to take care of things. The family moved into town. They then took up other professions like store keepers, etc. The Libeus had a place at Zaca Lake with a hotel and John Libeu became the District Forest Ranger up in that area. The people along the Sisquoc and Manzana eventually were starved out. They just could not make it, it was a hand to mouth sort of thing and after the Forest Service took over, the service said they could not burn the brush or over graze the land so they just gave up.

Lets go back and talk a little about the group as they began and where they came from. This will be more chronological.

Hiram Preserved Wheat was the patriarch of the homesteaders of our back country. He was a person who used the hands-on approach to healing. He was not a Mormon. The story of these people being Mormon is a false. He was not a Mormon. In "Santa Barbara's Wonderful Corner," by Walker A. Tompkins it says that Hiram was Mormon but it was later proved that none of these homesteaders were Mormon except Mr. Holeck, who stayed back there only a very short time. Mr. Holeck had a homestead way up the canyon nearly to the end of the area in a poor location so he did not stay.

The rest of the group were related to Mr. Wheat. Today

you would call this group a commune as associated with each other by religious beliefs or family ties. Hiram was one who believed that the laying of hands on a sick person could heal. Prayers would work wonders, and he believed in dietary restrictions, no liquor, tea, or coffee, the reduction of fats, lots of vegetables, lots of exercise. In other words he was before his time. He treated people with problems such as gout, and with these restrictions they got better, so people would come and stay with him for this treatment. They used cocoanut oil and vegetable oils for cooking rather than animal fats.

Hiram was born in New Hampshire in April, 1822, and migrated westward to Potawatome County, Kansas and had a homestead there of 160 acres. He married Elizabeth who was from Canada, born in 1828, she died in 1900, and is buried at Oceana, San Luis Obispo County. They, Hiram and Elisabeth, made many converts in Kansas of the Forresters, Davises, Montgomery, and several other families, that became this generalized group. Part of this was because of Hiram's daughters; Katherine Elizabeth, Minerva, Lucy E. and Addie (Adeline), as the men who married these girls became part of the group. In the early days of this community there was a post office that lasted less than a year, called "Atkins, California," after Mr. Atkins who had married Addie. Hiram ran the post office but apparently he could not read or write so there was a

little difficulty in running the post office.

PL: Where was this group of settlers located?

Mr. B: Up above the Sisquoc Land Grant. On the Sisquoc River there were some big terraces along the river that were available for homesteading and so the people moved out of the Santa Maria area and up the river and chose these large terraces to settle on. They took 169 acres each and the land around then was in reserve or in that early time it was just open so they used that adjacent land to farm too. They had cattle, put in fruit trees, vineyards, grew grains, and some was irrigated farming and some dry farming. They lived off the land with hunting and fishing. The raised the fruit and grain and cattle for market. When the time came to harvest or cattle large enough, they would load up their wagons and head for Santa Maria or other towns to sell their products. Usually the fruit from their region was ready at a different time from the valleys so the fruit especially, was very welcome. They would use the money they earned to buy staples, lumber, nails, saddles. They had to watch their resources as there was not much money.

PL: What happened to the community?

Mr. B: In 1898 the Pine Mountain and Zaca Lake Forestry Reserve was established and also at that same time there was a terrible drouth in this part of California so these two

factors working together caused the homesteaders to leave the area. Part of the year they tried to work outside their homestead by helping with the threshing crews in the valleys, but it was too difficult, the road to their settlement was 35 miles up the river with probably 50 to 60 crossings of the river and when there was a big flood all the crossing washed out and they were forever repairing these. In the winter time they sometimes could not get to town for a month or more and if a person was sick they had no way to get to a doctor so they depended on Hiram Preserved Wheat to heal them. One of Hiram's granddaughter, Bessie Wells, was a small child and died there, and is buried at the homestead site. One of the Wheat girls married William Harvey Wells and this was their child. Another son-in-law was Jake Atkins who the post office was named for.

The folks built their houses of Alder trees or Pine, making logs but most of the houses were framed, they hauled Redwood boards to that area and built one room cabins and as they prospered they would add on rooms. The Redwood was 2 by 12 or 1 by 12 feet boards. The only really well preserved house up there now is the Tunnell home. He sold to the Sisquoc Ranch as this is what happened to many of the people ans their difficulties became insurmountable, and they as homesteaders posed problems for the Sisquoc Ranch that ran cattle up there so Bob Easton decided to purchase the property of these

homesteaders and then that would give him control of the entire upper Sisquoc River area so if a homesteader was thinking of moving out Bob Easton would give him some money for the property and then Bob had more to use as leverage in trading land with the Forest Service or as a base for his Sisquoc Ranch.

Bob Easton was superintendent of the Sisquoc Ranch and the ranch was owned by the Bishop Corporation of San Francisco Bob Easton was married to a lady who was related to the Bishops. After the Bishops Corp. bought the grant, a survey was made and this brought controversy to the owners and the homesteaders because no one had surveyed the land back in that country very well. The original survey by the government was not well done as they thought no one would want that poor land in the back country. When the homesteaders filed on land the plots they filed did not jibe with the government surveys. This ended up with the homesteaders in some cases being given land that wasn't the land they were living on. This happened to the Tunnell family, the best part of their land, was inside the land grant even though the government had given them full patent to it. So then they lost out and sold to the Sisquoc Company.

PL: Were the Tunnells part of the Wheat community?

Mr. B: The Tunnells were a part but they were not as active in

the group as some of the others such as the Forresters and Davises. The Tunnells were sort of on the fringe.

PL: What about schools for the children?

Mr. B: There were a number of children with these people and they had a need for a school so in 1894 they formed the Manzana School District and there were three old timers, Mr. Wells, Mr. Forrester, and Mr. Villman, and we know his as Wellman, who were trustees for the school. The school house was built as a small one room building , after it was used for a period of time it became too small so they added on an additional ten feet on the back of the building moving the back wall to accommodate this extra ten feet. The school operated with a maximum of 22 to 24 students in it's heyday then after 1989 things began to slow down back there, many families moved away and by 1902 there were only two students left at school. The lady who was the teacher then was Bertha Kleine, sister of Mrs. Wellman. Miss Kleine became the wife of Joe Libeu, one of the forest ranger of the Zaca Lake area. End of Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

When you look into the genealogy of these people they were all related by marriage to the next family up or down the river. The children grew up and knowing each other there they usually married. The first teacher of the school was

a little red-head gal, Cora Glines who was only 17 when she was hired but she could not teach until she turned 18 so they delayed school until her birthday. Cora was also a reporter for the newspaper in Santa Maria and she wrote a number of articles about the comings and going of these people in the back country. These articles are very interesting to historians. The school house was the center of the community, they would meet for the 4th of July and have quite a celebration that went on until the day after and people had to get back to milk the cows. The teacher would have her students recite patriotic speeches. One story goes that the teacher had one little boy who was so shy that he would not speak up for his part, but over the weeks of practice, the teacher had the boy shouting out his speech and the parents were very pleased. Dances took place at the schoolhouse and people would come for miles and miles, this was their only entertainment. Later an organ was bought of the school, but other music was played on the violin, and guitar. Cora mentions the time she was dancing and threw her hip out, had to be put on a table and her brother straightened the hip but she always had a limp after that. On Sunday they often had programs with speakers that would come from different religious backgrounds, and this is how Mr. Hollack moved into the area. He was a Mormon and gave speeches about his religion but as was reported he was not well received by the community. The people mostly

followed the teachings of Hiram Preserved Wheat, and his philosophy and even after the colony came to and end and they all moved out of the area some of these people still carried on his teachings. The Davises who were related to Wheat had the land on the upper part of the usable land in the Manzana, and they decided to start a saw mill so they brought in a small mill and were going to run it with water power but after only a little while they realized that the river was not dependable for water power so they brought in a little wood burning "donkey" engine to use. They did saw the Digger Pine and Valley Oak. John Cody, a local artist of that area has some beautiful slabs of Valley Oak that this saw mill cut and I told him about these slabs hanging on an old pig pen there so we went down and brought back the slabs to use for coffee tables and those pieces of Valley Oak are still beautiful. The Davises were also interested in mining. They first claimed a piece of land where there was quick silver near Chimenea Canyon on the north side of Figueroa Mt. and Zaca Peak. The claim was never rich enough to be good enough to make any money but they did find that below there on the ridge. On the north side of Zaca Ridge were some chrome deposits and they bulldozed a road to that area during World War II that also went to their homestead on the Manzana. John Cody uses that way to get to his place. That road was not there during the homesteader's time, all they had was a horse trail.

PL: When the Davises had their saw mill operation, were they required to reforest?

Mr. B: No, there were no worries about that in those days. This was before the Forest Service was getting started. The forest will usually reforest itself and they did not cut all that wood anyway. They did cut enough to sheet the schoolhouse as it was so cold for the children with only one layer of wood siding that they put on a extra layer of pine. The schoolhouse is redwood on the inside. The Davises also cut Sycamore back there and used it to cover the floor of the Tunnell house, native Sycamore tongue and groove planks. The Tunnell house is still there and is now a line cabin for the Sisquoc Ranch, and in good shape.

PL: Could you tell me about the Libeu Family of Zaca Lake?

Mr. B: The Libeus came from France, down near the southern border,

but they were not Basque. Apparently John Libeu started out as a Seminary student for the Catholic Church but one of John's stories and he was full of them, told of his returning late at night back to the dormitory and being caught, and was asked to leave the school. John was going to be drafted into the French Army so he fled to the United States and came to Santa Barbara where he became established. He sent home money for his father, sister and brother to come to Santa Barbara. His sister went to

work for some people here as a French maid, later opened a very fine restaurant and hotel in Santa Maria near the train depot. Her name was Eulalie Libeu Massie. She used to bring the John Libeu girls in town for high school. As I understand it there was no great love between John and his younger brother Joe. John worked on a homestead with the Pinasi's and Garsons's and other French people up there on the Cuyama. East of Santa Maria there is an old adobe that John helped built. There were a number of homesteads up and down there. Apparently John went to work for Mr. Calkins of Santa Barbara, who owned the Zaca Ranch. This land grant, the Zaca, was thought to include Zaca Lake but when a little more surveying was done it was discovered that the lake was not a part of the grant. Mr. Calkins had some people up at Zaca as caretakers and the wife was expecting a baby, so the moved to town, and Mr. Calkins asked John Libeu to go to the lake to take care of the area. The surveyors came through and told John that the lake was not part of the grant. John immediately got on his horse and made tracks for the county courthouse in Santa Barbara and filed a homestead for Zaca Lake taking out a homestead in his own name and one in his father's name, 320 acres. The story goes that the second homestead was to be in brother Joe's name, but John used his father. Joe never got his half. Mr. Calkins was very upset with John. John developed the lake into a tourist attraction for people who liked to camp and fish. The lake was

stocked but periodically the lake "turns over" and the fish are killed for lack of oxygen. (Explained in the History of Zaca Lake, Tape No. 21) John did build a small hotel and then he became a Forest Ranger for the Zaca Forest District. His district ran from the Santa Ynez River on the south, the Cuyama River on the north, Tepusquet Canyon to beyond Taft, Cal. It was a very large area. He had some guards working with him, Edgar Davison, who had the district on Figueroa Mt. until he was replaced by Joe Libeu, Bill Smith who had the Cuyama District, Lamar Johnson's father was a ranger there too. John's district stopped at J.D. Reyes district on the upper Cuyama north of Ojai. John worked for the Forest Service until 1914. After that he developed a drinking problem, which caused his to loose his wife and family. He was too good a host to the campers at Zaca Lake and also over worked his wife. Katherine Libeu and the girls went to live in Los Angeles, she got half the lake that she sold to a doctor who was going to establish a health resort. John worked for the doctor for awhile then sold his half to the doctor. John was going back to France, and stopped off for a party in Los Angeles, drank too much, went to sleep on the street, contracted pneumonia and died.

PL: Can you describe there these homesteads were?

Mr. B: If we start down near the boundary of the Sisquoc and work our way up the river you come first to the George and Wm.

Tunnells, who late sold out to the Sisquoc Ranch. The next family was right at the mouth of Horse Gulch, the Forresters. This was "Whispering" Ed Forrester who had a very loud booming voice. The Forresters had come from Kansas with the Wheats. Ed and Lucian's mother was very deeply into this group and she lived at the homestead and her grave is right at the mouth of Horse Gulch in a clearing there. The Forresters were one of the group that had a good piece of land and water. Ed Forrester took what is called "In Leu Selection" where he took Gov't land somewhere else. About 1902 when things were coming to an end in the back country, there was land opening up in the Imperial Valley to irrigation so he took land there and gave his back county land to the government. He became a pillar of the community there at the south end of the Salten Sea. One of his younger children later returned to the Santa Ynez Valley, to Ballard. Above the Forresters was a homesteader but I can't think of the name right now. Then came Hiram Preserved Wheat, and all that remains now is a pile of rocks from the chimney, some nails and glass. Half way across this mesa there is a fence that used to run north and south and on the other side was Mr. Wells property. He married one of the Wheat girls. He was a go getter, very active and raised cattle and did well for himself. Hiram took over some of the homesteads when the daughters and families left the area, so he owned most of the land at the junction of the Manzana and Sisquoc. From

the Wells place up the river you come to the Roberts homestead.

End of Side 2, Tape 1

Begin Side 1, Tape 2

The Roberts were just above the schoolhouse on the south side of the Sisquoc River. Roberts was a son-in-law of Wheat. Right across from that homestead is Wheat Peak. As you go on the old road that used to cross back to the north side of the river lived a man named Spitler. Mr. Spitler had a walnut orchard and some citrus trees but everything is dead now, only part of a chimney is left. Then on up the river was the Lucian Forrester place. Lucian had a framed house along the river. Now the river turns and runs north and there you would come to the Calvin Davis place. This family was related to Fred Davis who homesteaded on the Manzana. Alonzo (Lonnie) Davis was a son of Fred. Next homestead as you round the bend of the river is a name I can't remember. but this man adopted a girl named Myrtle and this lady is still alive at 96 and living in Santa Barbara. Above this place you would come to Water Canyon and it was homesteaded for a very short time, the name I can't remember. Then the river narrows for a ways, the widens again all of a sudden and this was the homestead of Adolph Villman whose name has been corrupted to Wellman. He had a very large homestead, he was thrifty and hard working. He had lots of fruit trees and they were still alive a few years ago. He had grapes

and the Goodchilds of La Brea Canyon went over there and took cutting of those grapes for their place. Three years ago, I went to the old Goodchild place and took cuttings of the grape vines, and so the Wellman grapes are still growing here on my fence. Above Mr. Villman/Wellman was Herman Villman who had a lung condition and died and is burned up there as is Fred Davis, Cassandra Forrester and Bessie Wells. From Villmans there were a couple of homesteaders, Hollack who was the Mormon, and next, Ed Montgomery and that was the end of the road. There was no way to go any further because of the big narrows. Ed's father, Joshua Montgomery homesteaded on top of the Sierra Madre Range at Montgomery Potraro. A man named Jackson had a homestead up there and a road was built that is called the Jackson Trail. That trail is the way they used to get into the upper end of the Sierra Madres. When Joshua sold out he sold to the Sisquoc Ranch, who kept it for a number of years and then traded to the Forest Service for a selection of land down near the ranch on the north side up toward Manzanita Mts. The Montgomerys used to go further up to White Ledge and Mission Pine to cut shakes for roofs and up until 1909 those piles of shakes were still there as Rolly Libby told me of that.

PL: What were the duties of the Forest Ranger starting in 1898?

Mr. B: There main duties were the protect from fires and blaze

trails. When the Forest Service started they hired people who knew the country, had their own horses. The service was established to protect the water shed. During the fire season there rangers would leave their main camp and ride out in a different direction each day to patrol. Hunters were notorious for starting fires. They checked with the hunters to see that they had gun permits. Some of the rangers acted as game wardens. In order to patrol these rangers had to keep the trails clear and to establish new trails. Some of these trails were old Indian trails. Two or three of the rangers would start out early in the morning to be on the trail at 8 am to start to work. Their day of work did not start until the began to work. They worked until 4 pm then ride back to camp, feed their horse, get some dinner, wash clothes, all those extras were on their own time. They made 65 dollars a month. They had to furnish their own food and horse. Later the pay was increased to 75 dollars a month and it was then that Edgar B. Davison could get married to his sweetheart, Grace Lyons of Ballard. Grace later wrote a book about her experiences in the back country as a ranger's wife, "Beans for Breakfast," it is a good book. Edgar was a well educated man and kept a dairy as did all of the rangers, a daily log that told everything that the ranger did each day. This log was then at months end sent to the district office for review. Some of those ranger made tremendous rides through the district. Their horses

were very dependable and strong. In the first days they slept in tents but later on built cabins. There was a summer camp and a winter camp. They could even put in a hay crop near their cabin to feed their horses. The ranger who patroled La Brea Canyon took one whole day to get to Los Olivos for supplies and mail, and one day back to camp. Later he went to the Bee Ranch for the mail, as it was closer. All their miles of work on the trails was measured in rods.

PL: How did these few men control a fire in the forest?

Mr. B: Generally it depended on where the fire was and how close the men could get to it. The ranger would go into town and get volunteers, round up everyone they met on State Street, go to lower State to the bars and recruit people for fire duty, and they got paid to fight the fire. The ranger and his men would fir a fire from two sides to pinch the fire at the point or by starting back fires. As far as I know there were no fatalities from fighting fires.old timers were very good at fighting fires a crew of ten men could fight a very large fire but the main thing was to get there quickly for a good chance to contain it. In a big fire they usually had to wait for a change in the weather.

PL: Would you tell me about the Las Cruses area near Gaviota?

Mr. B: Las Cruses was settle on by Miguel Cordero in 1833, it was

former mission land. He was given the grant in 1836 by Gov. Chico, then in 1837 by Gov. Alvarado. He built a house and had two fields and a garden and orchard and over two thousand grape vines. By 1876 Vincente Cordero had added three more orchards. The sons would marry and move to another part of the land grant and start farming too. Back in 1846 the Tulare Indians raided the area and trapped 16 Hispanic people there . The people did survive the attack by hiding in the adobe. In March 1851 Miguel Cordero died leaving his widow with nine children. She could not read or write and was not aware that she should file to protect her rights to the land grant with the Cal. and Grant Commission that had been set up after California became a state. Maria Antonia Cordero died in 1857 and the land was in limbo for awhile. We believe the adobe, the one you see today was built in 1860 and about that time Frank Birabent from Birabaent Canyon near Figueroa Mt. ran cattle at Las Cruses, later Pedro Baron ran cattle there. Baron ran a stage stop there, and later moved down to Cuemada Canyon on the south coast with a stage stop. In 1863-4 there was a devastating drouth in the area and it was very hard on all the people who ran cattle on the great ranchos. In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act and Las Cruses was declared to be government land because the Widow Cordero had not filed for a patent on the land, but even before this she or her heirs had sold land to several people. They got together and in 1876 petitioned

Congress for title to the land, there were lots of complications as it had taken so long but on Aug. 1880 the grant was confirmed and there was another survey done in 1883 so Cordero did receive the patent but by then the land had been sold to others. In 1864 there was a murder on the adobe property. A William Corless and his wife who were living at the adobe and a Mexican sheepherder were killed and there was a lot of controversy about who had done it. The Williams Brothers, Steve and Bascom who had some interest in the stage line were suspected, but Bascom became the County Clerk and Steve went to San Luis Obispo and was himself killed in an unrelated incident. The murderers of the Corlesses were never found.

PL: What were these people after?

Mr. B: There was friction between the men about the ownership of the property and stage line. The stage ran between Santa Barbara and Gaviota and to the north to Matteis, and then there was another stage that went to Lompoc. Different people wanted control of the lines as this was the way to get from the coast to the valleys. In 1860 a crude road was built through the pass.

In 1875 W.W. Hollister, T.B. Dibblee built the wharf there and opened up the landing for grain hauling to markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The adobe became important to there freighters. In the 1880's Vincente Cordero sold the last interest of the Las Cruses to the Hollisters for

$2,218.00. The new owners built a big barn there that is still on the property. In 1887 the Pacific Coast Railroad finished the line from Port Harford to Los Olivos and the freighters found it much easier to take their product to the train. But there was still a stage line to Lompoc and Solvang and Jacob Loustalot and his wife took over the adobe in 1890 and managed it up until 1916. They added buildings to the area and made it a better place. They had an old Indian named Fernando Librado, working for them there. He had been born on Santa Cruz Island and worked for the different missions, Ventura, Santa Ynez, and eventually came to Las Cruses where he lived in a cave, across from the adobe. The cave was made of sandstone with an outcropping and he walled up the cave with boards and put a door on and this was his home. He lived to be over 100 and died in 1915. Fernando was an informant for John Peabody Harrington in his studies of the Chumash people. The Loustalots left the property in 1916.
End of Side 1, Tape 2

Begin Side 2, Tape 2
At one time there was a station established down near the water at Gaviota Miguel Burke had the stage station with a large house and barn. When they were digging the pipe line for Celeron they found the remains of two adobe buildings that seemed to be much older that the Burke enterprise. Possibly this was part of the Ortega family

because the Ortegas did own the Refugio Land Grant. Perhaps they moved on and left the adobes. The remains of the adobes have been covered and one day possibly there will be more to learn about them. Miguel Burke's station is in a picture I have with a clipper ship out in the water. The state now owns Gaviota and it is a state beach and state park and the Las Cruses Adobe is on state land. Vincente Ortega told me that Fernando had a "sitting cave" where he could sit and see up the valley to the north and that he spent a lot of time in his old age there. Near there in another drainage is a cave that has some painting in it but they are not too good and have been badly smoked. A sheepherder used to stay in the cave and cooked meals there and smoked the paintings. Those are the only cave painting in that area. Down toward Arroyo Hondo there is another canyon called Moleno Canyon and there are some paintings there.

PL: Do you think the Las Cruses Adobe is worth preserving?

Mr. B: It certainly is one of the best preserved of all the old Hispanic adobes. It has gone through many changes to modernize it. It would have to be determined what period should it represent, the Spanish time, Mexican time, American time. Certainly it is one of the few remaining early adobes around. It is on state land and there is a controversy between the Vista Del Mar School District and the state because the school district wants to built their

new school near the adobe, while the state says no, it is state land and has historic values. There was an Indian Village on the site the school wants.

PL: I'd like to ask you about the controversy in the county about raising Gibraltar Dam?

Mr. B: Yes, I was asked to go a historic survey for the Bowl Pit area when that was being done, and also I did the historic survey for the areas that would be flooded if the dam was raised so I have a little bit of background about what has gone on with Gibraltar. When the dam was originally built they found in a very short time that flood waters coming into the upper end of the lake was filling the lake and so they raised the dam an additional 20 feet so if you look at the dam today you will see where the top of the dam was raised. Now any time you put a dam across a flowing stream like the Santa Ynez River there is going to be siltation. In 1932 a very, very disastrous fire called Wheeler Fire burned a portion of the Caliente and upper Juncal Dam areas on the Gibraltar water shed. They built debris dams on Mono Creek and Caliente Creek to attempt to stop some of the debris from reaching the lake. In 1937 there was a very wet and hard winter and these two debris dams filled in one year, this did not reach the lake but other sources of debris did. When the lake was first built people could take a barge and travel on the water to the Mono Adobe. Now you can't get within two

miles of the same place it is so full of debris. Sand, silt and willows are there now. So now the water capacity has been drastically reduced by siltation. Santa Barbara with its increasing population needs some way to increase the water reserve so Santa Barbara is living on borrowed time if another disastrous fire should get started. One heavy rain after such a fire would fill the lake up. The Forest Service has been doing what they call controled burns in that area, burning brush that is as old as 50 to 75 years. The dam is built near but not on the Santa Ynez Fault. Juncal Dam is right on the fault. For sismic safety the city feels the dam should be strengthened. The city began studies and determined that they had two options, one to used borrowed pit material, sand, gravel, and rock crushed and mixed with cement to add fill below the present dam. The dam would act as a side to this fill and two, they could raise the dam another 20 feet. To do this they would have to fill below the dam with this same fill of rock and cement only this would be a large fill and would be done as a start to future times when the dam could be raised. There are two problems in raising the dam. One is an endangered bird called the Bells Least Viriel, that comes up from Mexico in the spring to raise its young. It nests in the willows of this man made willow area that was once water of the lake. The other thing is that if they raise Gibraltar they will cut down on the amount of water going down the Santa Ynez River and

the water perveyors down stream in Santa Ynez Valley and Lompoc Valley don't like that as the more water Gibraltar holds the less goes down the river. There would be less water for Lake Cachuma to store for those valleys. If Gibraltar is raised 20 feet that would mean it would hold a lot more water and they would have the priority as upstream with prior water rights and could fill the dam with less water for Cachuma. A number of agencies are saying, hey Santa Barbara, we don't want you to raise your dam because we want to raise our dam, as they are talking about raising Cachuma too. There is a problem in that both dams cannot store water until certain criteria is met with the Live Stream agreement, called the Gin Chow Decision. This is political and the water purveyors on the Santa Ynez River have taken the city of Santa Barbara to court in order to drag it along so that the time period will run out and Santa Barbara will have only one choice, that of using the smaller alternative rather than the larger fill.

PL: Do you have any idea how this will turn out?

Mr. B: No, it will have to be decided in the courts. My own feeling is to let them strengthen the dam and when the day comes that they begin to think about raising the dam that part will be ready. That will be the time for the environmental study to be done and heavens knows that may not be until 20 years from now.

PL: Why haven't they desilted the dam?

Mr. B: That is a question people have asked over and over. They have done some desilting but Gibraltar Dam is in a canyon and you can't go north or south very well because you have high walls so how do you get the material out? The desilting that has been done on the north side is now full and there are no areas close enough to put more silt. One idea was to put the silt into the Mission Canyon Tunnel, and sent it down to the ocean, but the environmentalists say no, don't contaminate the ocean. Of course for centuries the Santa Ynez River has done just that with it's silt going to Surf, west of Lompoc with the river water.

Mr. B: Back to the homesteaders, one of the main tributaries of the Sisquoc River in the lower portion are Horse Gulch and La Brea Canyon. Horse Gulch runs north from the area of the schoolhouse just about a mile above up into the Sierra Madres. It is a rather dry canyon as the river does not run all year. A man named Elliott purchased a homestead there and he started a big bee operation there and he also had a photographic business in Santa Maria. After about six months he was injured by a horse and gave up the homestead and no one ever attempted to farm there again. Down below there is a camp called Sluse Box Camp and apparently there is some bed rock that come to the surface

and some homesteaders found a small amount of placer there, but no one ever got rich from that gold deposit. They attempted to prospect that entire area of the Sisquoc basin and there is another canyon called the Mine Canyon and it has a little mine tunnel there but they never did find enough gold to make it pay. Coming down a little further is the main Sisquoc Ranch and right near the headquarters is a large canyon that drains the very large area to the north called La Brea Canyon. a couple on miles up that canyon in the Monterey Formation is natural tar seeps. The tar oozes all over the rocks and it is sticky and old times tarred their roofs with it. That canyon runs water all year round in fact there were beaver there once. As you come up the canyon a number of people tried to homestead there and one that was really satisfactory was the Goodchilds. They bought a homestead that had been established and then bought more. Ralph Goodchild built quite an extensive ranch. Where he built is a Chumash village and there are several places where there are cave paintings and some cupule rocks. A number of people homesteaded there, one was Henry Dutcher. Mr. Dutcher had a place where the road from the mountains comes down to Rattlesnake Canyon and he had some good property there and stayed a number of years when his son-in-law Doc Weber took over. It is now owned by the Garsons and they are trying to trade it back to the Forest Service for "in Leu Selection." Up the canyon a little

further was an old German. There was a homestead on Smith Fork where the Smiths lived. William Smith was a forest ranger up there. The area is on the dry side but some nice hillsides with oak grass land so it was good for grazing but never good for farming. Ralph Goodchild stayed in there and ranched until he was very old, and his son Bobbie took over the operation until he was 65 and then he and Blanche put the ranch up for sale and it was taken over by some people from Santa Maria as a hunting preserve. There are a number of cabins there for hunters.

PL: I'm afraid we have no more tape, Jim, but I thank you for this most interesting interview on the Santa Barbara Back Country and it's homesteaders.